

## Our Badge of Honor

by Captain Vincent Heintz

As a company commander, I stand before our platoons and award the Combat Infantryman's Badge to our soldiers. I am struck by the honor and reverence paid to this symbol of courage and determination by the very soldiers who dedicate themselves to excellence on every combat mission.

This award was created to recognize the sacrifice and hardships the Infantryman endures during his combat service. There is no award that Infantry Soldiers desire more than the Combat Infantryman's Badge. This badge is a symbol of their courage and determination. It cannot be earned by any other means than doing the job they have trained for, engaging the enemy in direct contact. It is an honor that many other soldiers may never have the opportunity to earn. It is an honor bestowed upon few members of the military.

As I look around the country of Iraq, through the eyes and ears of my soldiers, my leaders and the news media, I begin to understand just how well our soldiers are performing.

We are asked to perform our mission on a day-to-day basis in an extremely dangerous area. Yet, we realize that it can always get worse. We read about and hear about the sacrifices being made in Samarra, Fallujah, Baqubah and Najaf and we realize that our area can always become more dangerous. We pay homage to our brother Soldiers, Airmen and Marines who serve in these deadly areas.

We do not have all of the amenities you hear about on other Forward Operating Bases; no mess hall, no post office, no pool, no movie theater, no palace coffee shop, etc. But we are not as bad off as some others either. We reside in bunkers, not tents as our fellow soldiers on the Iranian border do. We have a gym and a great mini PX, run by our own soldiers. We have made our base a better place to live for our soldiers, as we should.

We live in a dangerous place and in a dangerous time, yet each day we continue to perform at the highest levels. We are vigilant and alert for any action taken against us and ready to continue the fight to make Iraq a free and sovereign nation founded on democratic ideals. We spend as much of our time focused on military operations, as we do on civil military operations, all in the best interests of the Iraqi people.

The sacrifices made by United States soldiers are great and are not always recognized and published by the media. All of the great things we have done for the people of Iraq should be reported, and recognized for what they are, just

like the regular soldiers over here are recognized with our badge of honor, the Combat Infantryman's Badge.



